

From: Patrick Wyatt
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/24/02 11:09am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I wanted to respond to the proposed Microsoft Settlement. Through the course of my career in computer programming, Microsoft has been both an ally and a competitor, so while I don't think that I'm unbiased I believe that I have some insight into both sides of the case.

Microsoft has always been a fearsome competitor because of their control of the operating system and their ongoing ability to leverage that control to create other business opportunities, like giving users simple and easy access to MSN and Hotmail over other competing alternatives. Going forward, I think that this is just the first small vision of what we'll see in the long term, where Microsoft's power enables them to dominate significantly larger parts of our lives. While this isn't technically illegal, it does give me pause, because too much power concentrated in one location can easily create tyranny.

Without being too long-winded, the solution that I wanted to mention for your consideration is this: make Microsoft convert their "Office Suite" of programs to run on other operating systems. Inasmuch as Office already runs on the Macintosh, I expect that they would be able to make it run on the open-source Unix environments like OpenBSD, FreeBSD, NetBSD, and Linux, all of which are quite similar in terms of their interoperability. These operating systems would benefit greatly from having a solid, professional suite of office productivity applications, and would somewhat mitigate Microsoft's ability to dominate the operating system market going forward and hence reduce the concentration of power they now have.

I realize that this proposal would require considerably more thought before implementation, but I wanted to bring the idea up for your consideration. I hope that whatever settlement does eventually get approved does take into consideration not just remedies to correct past wrongs, but also creates mechanisms which will create a free marketplace and reduce the opportunity for dominance by a single entity.

Best of luck, I'm expect that you'll need a fair bit of it before the process is complete!

Patrick Wyatt